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ABSTRACT

A national survey of 128 institutions of higher education employing behavioral disorders (BD) faculty sought to obtain information to aid in the evaluation of the need for behavioral disorders personnel preparation at the leadership level. Results obtained from 102 institutions, an 80% response, indicated the following: (1) 46% of respondents had sought one or more BD faculty members during the past 5 years, and 16% had failed to find a suitable faculty member; (2) 73% of open positions were replacement positions, and 27% were due to program expansion; (3) the most frequent reasons for needing replacement faculty were turn-over, retirement, and death or illness; (4) the majority of respondents indicated a sufficient number of female applicants but an insufficient number of minority applicants. It is concluded that the significant short-fall in graduates and the insufficient number of graduates choosing BD careers in institutions of higher education indicates that BD preparation programs need to concentrate on attracting more students, particularly minority students, into doctoral level programs. Additional student financial support is recommended to aid in recruiting. The questionnaire is included. (JDD)

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A Study of the Present and Future Needs for Leadership Personnel to Train Educators in Behavioral Disorders

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Abstract

A survey was conducted to obtain data to aid in assessing the need for leadership personnel for teacher education in behavioral disorders. Data was derived from a 17-item questionnaire sent to 128 institutions of higher education (IHEs). A total of 102 (80%) responded. The data strongly indicate there is currently a short-fall of qualified personnel to fill present and future needs of IHEs for faculty in the area of behavioral disorders.

A Study of the Present and Future Needs for Faculty in Teacher Training for the Area of Behavioral Disorders

One population that has experienced a steady growth in services in recent years is the behaviorally disordered (BD) or seriously emotionally disturbed (SED). This trend toward increasing service to students with behavioral disorders is evident in data published in the Twelfth Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Education of the Handicapped Act (1990). Since the passage of P.L. 94-142, service to students with behavioral disorders has gone from approximately .54% to about .99% of the school-aged population. This upward trend in service level represents an increase in the number of students served of approximately 37%. While the greatest increases took place during the early years of this legislation's implementation, increases in service have occurred each year. According to the above report, the current need for SED teachers is 4388, which is significantly exceeded only by the number of LD teachers needed and only slightly exceeded by the need for cross-categorical teachers. Of course, the latter category includes

students with behavioral disorders.

The prevalence of behavioral disorders is officially put at 2-3%. According to some recent research, a more realistic prevalence estimate is probably between 6% and 10% (Institute of Medicine, 1989; Kazdin, 1989). Since the current service level is only about 1%, there clearly exists the potential for significant and continuing increases in the need for teachers of the emotionally disturbed. With a renewed emphasis on service to seriously emotionally disturbed students in the reauthorization, in 1990, of P.L 94-142 (P.L. 100-476), continued growth in services and need for classroom teachers can be expected.

The above clearly indicates an increasing need for behavioral disorders teachers generated by expansion of services to this historically under-identified population (Center & Obringer, 1987; Center & Eden, 1990; Long, 1983). In addition to expansion, there is a continuing need for teachers to replace those leaving the field. Behavioral disorders may have one of the highest teacher attrition rates in education. One of the most frequently cited reasons given by BD teachers

for leaving teaching is stress (Platt & Olson, 1990). Attrition studies (Lawrenson & McKinnon, 1982; Hill & Parker, 1983; Seery, 1990) have found nationwide attrition rates of 30-50% over a three year period for teachers of students with behavioral disorders. In fact, some states, e.g., Georgia, have had to implement emergency certification procedures in order to meet the demand for behavioral disorders teachers (Georgia State Department of Education, 1988). Given the apparent need for teachers indicated by the above, there follows the question, is there a sufficient supply of faculty to prepare these teachers?

Smith and Lovett (1987) report an estimated attrition rate for existing special education faculty of 10% per year due to retirement. These authors report that this rate is expected to accelerate after 1993. Center and Kaufman (1990) report a rate of BD faculty attrition of 18.5% due to retirement. Further, this study found 28% of BD faculty to be between 50 and 60 years of age. Assuming a minimum of one behavioral disorders faculty member for each of the approximately 256 existing programs (National Information Center for Children and Youth with Handicaps, 1987) in the U.S. in

1987, there are at least 256 behavioral disorders teacher educators currently employed by institutions of higher education (IHEs).

A 10% attrition rate suggests a replacement need of approximately 26 new faculty per year. This figure does not reflect attrition due to early retirement, death, illness, or for various personal reasons, e.g., low pay (Smith & Lovett, 1987), or job dissatisfaction (Prehm, 1984; Zabel, Smith, & White, 1984). Smith and Lovett report that 48% of full professors indicate that they would take early retirement if it was available. There is currently a trend in many IHEs to offer early retirement programs, so attrition due to retirement could exceed the 10% estimate. The approximate replacement need of 26 also fails to reflect positions that may become available due to program expansion. It is not unreasonable to project that in the near future there will be a potential need to fill significantly more than 26 behavioral disorders faculty positions per year.

Smith and Lovett (1987) also report data that indicate the major doctoral granting institutions are

turning out, on the average, slightly less than 100 special education doctoral graduates per year in all areas of special education. The National Center for Educational Statistics (1991) reports that only eight doctoral degrees were awarded in emotional disturbance during the period 1984-85 to 1988-89. Thus, there appears to be an average output of approximately two graduates per year. Clearly, such a limited supply of new personnel is grossly insufficient to meet the potential need estimate of 26 behavioral disorders faculty per year.

This apparent short-fall is further aggravated by the likelihood that not all of these graduates choose to go into teacher education. Bowne and Schuster (1986) report that only 27% of new Ph.D. graduates in Arts and Sciences choose careers in higher education. A similar statistic for special education is not available. Our experience at GSU with special education graduates closely approximates the findings for Arts and Sciences reported above. In the past 15 years, approximately 20% of our graduates in behavioral disorders, have chosen to take positions in IHEs. In view of the above discussion, the findings of Smith, Pierce, and Keyes

(1988) that IHEs are currently experiencing difficulty in obtaining faculty to fill positions in behavioral disorders is not surprising.

Behavioral disorders faculty at IHEs need an empirical data base upon which to make decisions about leadership preparation programs and to document need in grant proposals soliciting funds to support leadership preparation in behavioral disorders. The importance of empirical documentation of need in grant proposals seeking federal funds has recently been emphasized by the U.S. Department of Education (Thomas & Sutherland, 1987). The present study was undertaken to obtain data to aid in the evaluation of the need in behavioral disorders for personnel preparation at the leadership level. The study undertook a national survey of IHEs, employing behavioral disorders faculty, to obtain current information about personnel needs and related data.

The questions we attempted to answer included the following:

1. Is there a need for faculty with behavioral disorders backgrounds to train teachers to work with students with behavioral problems?

2. If there is a need, what is the basis for the need?
3. Is the quality of the current applicant pool satisfactory?
4. Are there a sufficient number of minority and female personnel currently available to fill faculty positions?

Method

The first step was to construct a questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 17 questions that sought information related to success in faculty recruitment, satisfaction with the applicant pool, the skills required of the prospective faculty, whether the position was cross-categorical, and sex and racial distributions of the applicants. The survey questions are presented in Table One. To obtain subjects for this survey, a random sample (N = 128) was taken from the 256 colleges and universities cited as offering teacher preparation programs in BD in the most recent edition (1987) of the National Directory of Special Education Personnel Preparation Programs.

Insert Table One

About Here

Results

One hundred and twenty-eight institutions were contacted and 102 (80%) responded. The survey results are presented in Table One. Of the 102 IHEs that responded 83% indicated that they had behavior disorder teacher education programs. Further, 37% indicated that they expected to hire at least one BD faculty member and 5% expected to hire more than one faculty member within the next five years. Of the respondents, 46% had hired or attempted to hire someone within the past five years. Among those seeking a faculty member, 84% indicated that they had found a suitable faculty member. The average number of applicants was 14.1, and the average search took 8.1 months.

Twenty-seven percent of the positions were open due to program expansion and 73% were replacement positions. Forty-one percent of the replacement positions were open due to retirements; 51% were due to faculty turn-over; and 8% were due to death or illness. The respondents

also indicated that, on average, 40% of their existing faculty members were age 50 or above and 20% of these faculty were age 60 or above.

The most sought-after skill in applicants was teaching. Writing, research, grant, and service skills were all rated as important but less important than teaching skills. Other skills listed by some respondents as important were classroom teaching experience, advising, supervision, teaming, and program development.

For those IHEs seeking a cross-categorical faculty member, the most sought-after area of additional expertise was learning disabilities followed by mental retardation. A small number of respondents were also seeking someone with additional expertise in gifted and speech and language. Other areas cited by respondents included early childhood special education, juvenile justice, chronically ill and computer skills.

Respondents who filled their open position were highly satisfied with the skills of the individual they employed as indicated by the mean rating of 4.5 on the quality rating scale. However, respondents rated the

overall quality of their applicant pool an average of 3.3. In addition, 24% of the respondents reported that there was an inadequate number of female applicants, and 85% indicated that there was an inadequate number of minority applicants.

Of the faculty members hired, the majority (74%) were employed as assistant professors. The average age of the employed individuals was 37.4 years. Sixty-nine percent of those hired were female and only 9% were minority group members.

Only nine percent of the respondents indicated that they had a doctoral level training program in behavior disorders. These institutions reported an average of 3.43 doctoral level graduates during the past five years. Approximately half of these graduates were reported to have taken college teaching positions. The eight institutions reported an average of 3.43 each for the past five year period. They also projected an average of 12 graduates each during the next five years.

Discussion

The first question examined was: Is there a need for faculty with BD backgrounds to train teachers to work with students with behavioral problems? Forty-six

percent of our respondents had sought one or more BD faculty members during the past five years. Sixteen percent of our respondents had failed to find a suitable faculty member. These results indicate a current shortfall of behavioral disorders faculty during the five year period covered by this study.

The second question was: If there is a need for faculty, what is the basis for the need? Seventy-three percent of the open positions were replacement positions. Replacement of faculty was necessitated by three factors. The most frequent reasons for replacement were turn-over (51%), retirement (41%) and death/illness (8%). Retirement combined with death/illness accounts for almost 50% of the replacement positions. This suggests an average replacement need per year of approximately 10% for the five year period covered by this study. This estimate is consistent with the findings of Smith and Lovett (1987) reported earlier. Thus, the estimated need, due to retirement and death/illness, for replacement faculty in behavioral disorders should be approximately 26 per year for the foreseeable future.

The present study also supports Smith and Lovett's prediction that retirements would accelerate after 1993. We found that approximately 40% of the faculty in departments responding to this survey were above the age of 50. Thus, it is likely a substantial number of these faculty will be reaching retirement age in the 1990's.

Twenty-seven percent of the open positions were due to program expansion. This figure supports Smith and Lovett's (1987) finding that special education teacher preparation programs are increasing, by an average of 1.2% per year, in order to meet the growing demand for special education teachers. Expansion should be particularly true for behavior disorders due to the recent legislative emphasis on SED referred to earlier.

Based on the findings in the present study the need for faculty due to expansion is estimated at 2.5% per year. This figure suggests the need for another 6.5 faculty per year due to program expansion. Collectively, these findings indicate a possible need for 32 new faculty per year. When this need is compared to the the current supply of approximately 3.43 BD doctoral graduates per year found by this survey, a significant short-fall is indicated. As reported the

IHes project an average of 12 graduates per institution during the next five years. There is some question about the accuracy of this projection, since the output of doctoral graduates is expected to be so much greater than the 3.43 reported for the previous five year period. In either case, the output is significantly below the anticipated need for for BD faculty. This short-fall is even more serious than it appears based on our finding that only approximately 58% of new doctoral graduates in behavioral disorders take positions in teacher education programs.

The third question asked: Is the quality of the current applicant pool satisfactory? The respondents rated the quality of the applicant pool an average of 3.3 on a five point scale, where one was poor and five was excellent. It is clear that the respondents don't perceive the applicant pool as being of exceptional quality. The basis for this perception is unclear from the data collected.

The fourth question raised was: Are there a sufficient number of minority or female personnel currently available to fill faculty positions? Seventy-

six percent of the respondents indicated a sufficient number of female applicants applied. Further, of the positions filled by our respondents, 69% of those employed were female.

Eighty-five percent of the respondents indicated that there was an insufficient number of potential behavioral disorders faculty from minority groups. Further, of the positions filled, only 9% of those employed were from minority groups. This suggests either too little is being done to recruit minorities into leadership preparation programs or they are not sufficiently attracted by careers in higher education.

One possible explanation for a lack of success at recruiting high quality minority students is competition with other fields, e.g., business. Another possibility is that minority students are completing leadership preparation programs but not choosing careers in higher education. If this is the case, IHEs are failing in a recruitment competition with other potential employers, e.g., public schools.

In conclusion, the significant short-fall in graduates and the insufficient number of graduates choosing BD careers in IHEs, indicates that BD preparation

programs need to concentrate on attracting more students, particularly minority students, into doctoral level programs. They also need to concentrate on recruiting students who have teacher education as their primary career objective.

In our opinion, for IHEs to attract a larger number of doctoral students, more student financial support is needed. Doctoral study is a long and expensive process that usually requires students to give up full-time positions. Further, students entering doctoral programs are older and often have family obligations that prohibit such studies without significant financial support. The typical level of support through assistantships is usually inadequate to meet the economic needs of doctoral students with ongoing financial obligations.

It also appears that IHEs need to take steps to deal with some of the factors that may be contributing to dissatisfaction with careers in teacher education, e.g., low pay. No doubt such dissatisfactions are accelerating the trend toward early retirement, leaving the field for other careers, and ultimately the failure to choose teacher education as a career by many doctoral

graduates in behavioral disorders. Teacher education programs should consider making faculty positions more attractive and competitive, and leadership preparation programs need to select students who are committed to careers in teacher education.

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Table 1

Emotional/Behavioral Disorders

Teacher Educator Questionnaire

I. Screening Questions:

1. Do you have a program to **train teachers** to work with students who have behavioral/emotional disorders?

_85__ Yes (83%) _17__ No (17%)

If yes, continue on to question (2). **If no**, please return this questionnaire in the envelope provided.

2. Do you have a **doctoral degree** program in behavioral/emotional disorders?

_8___ Yes (9%) _80__ No (91%)

If yes, how many graduates have you had from this program in the past five years? _3.43_ (Avg)

What percentage of these graduates took college teaching postitions? _54%_ (Avg)

Estimate the number of graduates for the next five years? _12_ (Avg)

3. Please **indicate the number** of behavioral disorders faculty, in your department, in each of the following age categories:

_1_20's	_27_30's	_42_40's	_37_50's	_7_60's	_2_70's
1%	23%	36%	32%	6%	2%

4. Have you hired or attempted to hire, **within the past five years**, a faculty member with a behavioral/emotional disorders background?

_40_Yes (46%), More than one, _6_ (7%) _47__ No (54%)

5. Do you expect to hire, **within the next five years**, a faculty member with a behavioral/emotional disorders background?

_31__Yes (37%), More than one, _4_ (5%) _52__No (63%)

II. Position Questions:

1. The position was (will be) open due to:

_13_(27%)_ Expansion _36_(73%)_ Replacement

2. **If you checked replacement**, the position was (will be) open because of:

_15___ Retirement (41%) _3____ Death/Illness (8%)

_19___ Faculty turn-over (51%) _0__ Other

3. Rate the importance of the following applicant characteristics to your position on a five point scale 1 = of little importance and 5 = of great importance.

_4.5__ Teaching skills _3.2__ Grant skills

_3.6__ Writing skills _3.3__ Service skills

_3.4__ Research skills _4.8__ Other

4. **If your position was (will be) cross-categorical,** which of the following additional content areas were (will be) sought in an applicant?

_34_ Learning disabilities (52%) _4__ Gifted (6%)

_20_ Mental retardation (31%) _1__ Speech and language (2%)

_6__ Other (9%)

III. Search Questions

1. **How many applicants** did you have for the position?

Avg = _14.1_

2. Were there an adequate number of **qualified applicants** who were:

a. **Female:** Yes = 26 (76%) or No = 8 (24%)

b. **Minority group members:** Yes = 5 (15%) or No = 29 (85%)

3. How would you rate the **quality of your applicant pool** relative to the characteristics you thought were important (Question 3, Part II) for your position?

Poor 1 2 3 4 5 Excellent

Avg = 3.3

4. Did you **hire** someone for your position?

Yes = 84% or No = 16%

If yes, approximately how long did your search take?

Avg = _8.1_ Mo.

If no, approximately how long have you searched?

Avg = _10_ Mo._

5. **If you hired someone**, how would you **rate the quality** of this individual relative to the characteristics (Question 3, Part II), you thought were important for your position?

Poor 1 2 3 4 5 Excellent

Avg = 4.5

6. **If you hired someone**, at what level was this person employed?

_3%__ Instructor _74%_ Assistant

_17%_ Associate _6%__ Full Professor

7. **If you hired someone**, please respond to each of the following:

a. **Approximate age**? _37.4__

b. **Sex**? Male = 31% or Female = 69%

c. **Minority status**? Minority = 9% or Non-minority = 91%

Surveyed: 128 Responded: 102 Percent: 80